

## AN 80TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION BY THE LTFUC *by Ray Levy*

The penultimate function during the 80th anniversary year of the London Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged Children took place on 18th October 2008 in The Palace of Westminster. The Gala Dinner and Dance was held to celebrate 80 years of assisting disadvantaged children in Greater London and what a fabulous and memorable evening it was.

Guests started arriving from 5pm; after passing through stringent security, they made their way to the Grand Hall, from where they were taken on a guided tour of both chambers of the Houses of Parliament. This most informative and enlightening tour led to a Champagne Reception on the terrace overlooking the Thames and Westminster Bridge and here the Fund's Honorary President, Bill Tyzack, BEM, Honorary Chairman David Lessman and members of the committee welcomed all their guests. Just before 7.30pm, dinner was announced by Toastmaster, Ashley Powell and the assembled company made their way to the Members Dining Room for



Lee Scott MP

Dinner. After 'Grace' led by The Right Worshipful Lord Mayor of Westminster, Councillor Louise Hyams, a sumptuous meal of Traditional oak smoked Scottish Salmon, Roast rump of Dorset Lamb with sherry sauce and a delicious L'Arlequin dessert was enjoyed by all, followed by Coffee, Petit Fours and after dinner liqueurs and wines.

Host for the evening was Lee Scott MP, who made a speech welcoming the guests. This was followed by a toast to The Queen by the Chief Superintendent of the City of London Police, Mr Alex Robertson, ATPO. The next toast to the Guests came from the fund's Honorary Life President, Bill Tyzack, BEM, who humorously enlightened everyone with a brief history of the Fund and also thanked his wife Grace, the Committee and their partners for all their loyal support. The last toast came from Brian Rice, Chairman of Dial-a-Cab.

A response was then made by the Fund's Honorary Chairman, David Lessman, who welcomed all the guests and congratulated Honorary Life Member, Bill Tyzack, BEM, who had also celebrated his 80th birthday earlier this year. He also acknowledged and thanked our many sponsors over the last 80 years and the following for their sponsorship of this event;

Brian Rice and Dial-a-Cab for the Champagne Reception; Peter DaCosta and KPM Taxis & Mercedes-Benz for the table wine; Doug Sherry, MBE and Audrey Sherry for the Entertainment; Alan Fisher, Editor of Call Sign magazine for the photography and Michael Holland and Cheryl Holland for the printing. David said he was particularly pleased that Doug Sherry was present and congratulated him on his birthday.

David went on to point out that within the fund's title are the words 'Drivers' and 'Children' and that utmost importance should be placed on the first of these, the countless Drivers who have served this fund so well since 1928 giving their time freely when taking part in the events for which the fund has become legendary. He paid a special tribute to them, as without the drivers there would be no outings and we are deeply grateful to them all. He then referred to the thousands of children whose lives have been enriched by the Fund over the last 80 years in so many ways. He also extended grateful thanks to the taxi trade press for their support in giving the Fund space in their publications when required.

During his speech, David also recognised the valuable, unstinting and genuine support and loyalty of his fellow trustees and appreciated the time given to organise this event by committee member Michael Son. The motto of the LTFUC is 'None Walks So Tall as he who stoops to help a Child'. This has been ably demonstrated many times since 1928 and with continued support, many more children will continue to benefit for many years to come.

At the conclusion of the dinner, guests were invited to make their way to the Strangers Dining Room where they could dance to the first rate music of 5 piece Band, Bellissima, or go to the Pugin Room for quieter conversation. The LTFUC is sincerely grateful to Mr Lee Scott MP for hosting this event and to his wife Estelle for all the kind assistance given in the planning stages of this brilliant and memorable function, a first for the London taxi trade.



## BLITZ BOY *by Alf Townsend*

Well known to the London taxi trade for his columns in the trade press, taxi driver Alf Townsend has written a new book. Blitz Boy is a fascinating recollection of life in the Blitz and of evacuation to Cornwall. For many younger people today the harrowing and touching tale of what it was like for a young inner-city child to suffer the trials of war at first hand is hard to envisage, but Alf's book brings it to life. Alf says: "The mass exodus of kids from Britain's major cities in 1940 was unique - with the government's hasty organisation programmes leaving a lot to be desired. It must have been quite a shock to rural communities to take in frightened, scruffy, poverty-stricken cases from the poorest areas of Britain's cities."

Many of the foster parents who took in these children did so purely for the cash (8s 3d per week). The family which took in Alf and his siblings did not treat them well. There were beatings and other punishments from the foster-mother, who thought nothing of mistreating a six-year-old child.



This only ended when the author's real mother turned up on the doorstep to reclaim her children. The author and his siblings remained in Cornwall with their mother until the end of the war to evade the danger of being bombed-out back in London. Eventually, though, they did return to the capital. The sight that greeted them on their return came as a shock. Rows of houses had been destroyed and huge areas had been totally flattened. Although life was tough back in London, at least the Townsend children were back in the fold of their loving family. Alf recalls this time with much fondness, going into the details of day-to-day life back home. By the end of the book Alf recounts his return to Cornwall 60 years later and his thoughts of his evacuation at that time. The book also contains pictures from the time of Alf's evacuation and his return to bombed London.

If you are looking for a great Christmas gift, this book fits the bill perfectly.